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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2565

July 3, 1992

\$5 MILLION FOR SCHOOL BREAKFASTS -- USDA has awarded \$5 million in federal grants to school districts in 27 states to help start school breakfast programs in the next school year. The grants are part of a five-year program that began in 1990 to provide start-up funds for new school breakfast programs, says Betty Jo Nelsen, administrator of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. "These grants have helped bring more than 6,000 schools and a million children into the School Breakfast Program since they began in 1989." Contact: Phil Shanholtzer (703) 305-2286.

GREAT PLAINS WIND EROSION DOWN -- Wind erosion in the Great Plains was down significantly -- half of what it was a year ago -- during the November through May wind erosion season. William Richards, chief of USDA's Soil Conservation Service, says reports from the 10-state Great Plains area indicate wind has damaged 4.3 million acres, compared to last year's 8.2 million acres. Contact: Ted Kupelian (202) 720-5776.

SEVERE FIRE SEASON -- The Forest Service has added 11 helicopters, 30 fire crews, and 70 smokejumpers to respond to a potentially severe fire season. "We have alerted the Department of Defense, which has 2,000 personnel available plus a battalion of helicopters," said F. Dale Robertson, USDA's Forest Service chief. "Fire conditions in the western United States are the worst since 1988." Conditions are poorest in states from the Pacific Coast to the Dakotas, including parts of Wyoming, Utah and Nevada, as well as the southern two-thirds of Florida. "The American people can help by being extremely careful with fire when in the forests and by quickly reporting fires they discover," Robertson said. Contact: Judith Leraas (202) 205-1498

CATFISH PROCESSING UP 25 PERCENT -- Farm-raised catfish processed during May totaled 39.1 million pounds round weight, up 25 percent from May 1991. During May, producers sold 19.5 million pounds of processed fish, an increase of 16 percent from last May. Sales of whole fish represented 35 percent of the total and fillets accounted for 47 percent. The remaining 18 percent were mostly steaks, nuggets and value-added products. Contact: Joel Moore (202) 720-3244.

OIL EQUALS BUTTER -- Cocoa butter is the primary ingredient in chocolate, baked goods and a variety of other food and nonfood products. All cocoa butter in the U.S. is imported. Last year the bill totalled \$279 million. USDA's Agricultural Research Service scientists have found a way to make a cocoa-butter-like product from cottonseed oil and sunflower oil that can replace pure cocoa butter in 90% of its uses. If commercially developed it could be a new use for agricultural products. Contact: George Abraham (504) 286-4339.



FOUR VIRUS-BASED INSECTICIDES have been approved by the Environmental Protection Agency for use on crops in the United States. But the slow-acting nature of the viruses have helped to keep the insecticides on the sidelines. That may change. USDA's Agriculture Research Service has negotiated an agreement with a manufacturer to research and develop compounds that increase the deadliness of the viruses to a select group of insect pests. Laboratory tests show that the celery looper virus, a naturally occurring microbe, has much promise. Insects once infected don't recover, as they can with *Bacillus thuringiensis*, or Bt. And its effective on a wide range of pests such as tomato and tobacco hornworms, tobacco budworms, cotton bollworms, corn borers, and cabbageworms. Cotton bollworms alone cost U.S. growers \$1.5 billion each year.

Contact: Patrick Vail (209) 453-3000.

FRUIT FLY ERADICATION PROJECT -- A recent study shows that the methods employed to eradicate the Mexican fruit fly have no significant impact on human health or the environment. USDA's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service is cooperating with the California Department of Food and Agriculture to eradicate the Mexican fruit fly from the Los Angeles Area. The environmental study was prepared in accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act. Contact: Courtney Billet (301) 436-7776.

JACK'S BEANSTALK -- Tropical corn hybrids can grow 15 feet tall, as compared to 10 feet for regular corn hybrids. What's the advantage of tropical corn? Wayne Reeves, an agronomist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service, says fertilizer can be cut back two-thirds, 45 pounds instead of 150 pounds per acre; it can be planted later in the season; and the tightly wrapped husks discourage insect pests from getting inside to feast on the kernels. Used for feed grain and livestock silage, tropical corn is suited for the southeastern section of the U.S. Contact: Wayne Reeves (205) 844-3996.

SLIGHTLY UPWARD -- The per acre value of U.S. farm real estate is expected to average unchanged to two percent higher this year. This compares to last year's one percent increase. Underlying the forecast are expectations that three factors will be lower during the year: net farm income; interest rates on farm real estate loans; and inflation. 1992 opened with the average value of U.S. farm real estate at \$685 an acre, compared to the 1987 low of \$599 per acre. Contact: Roger Hexem (202) 219-0423.

WETLANDS PROTECTION HOTLINE -- The Environmental Protection Agency has introduced a Wetlands Protection Hotline. It provides referrals and information on federal regulatory programs and governmental actions concerning wetlands. The toll-free service operates Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays, from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., EST. The telephone number is (800) 832-7828.

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FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1830 -- For more than a decade people have been watching the progress of the Africanized Bees as they move toward and into North America. On this edition Jim Henry gives the latest update on the bees. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1312 -- Seafood soaring; the popularity of potatoes; USDA reaches out to Native Americans; the village smithy; the cowboy cook. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1821 -- USDA News Highlights; beneficial interest for commodity programs; report crop conditions to the local ASCS office; supercharging soils with cheese whey; saving stored grain from insect damage. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1527 -- Fat intake and blood pressure; cutting the fat; facts about fats; testing for residues; fungicide test. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Tues., July 14, weekly weather and crop update; China outlook; Wed., July 15, livestock and poultry outlook; milk production report; Thurs., July 16, vegetable outlook; Fri., July 18, ag outlook. (These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.)

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

FEATURES -- Patrick O'Leary reports on Blanchard Springs Caverns; Lynn Wyvill reports on managing crop residue and Joe Courson reports on special watermelons.

ACTUALITIES -- Excerpts from President George Bush's speech to the Agricultural Communicators Congress; Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan remarks to the Ag Communicators Congress; USDA meteorologist Norton Strommen on the latest weather and crop developments and Soil Conservation Service analyst Bob Smith on Great Plains wind erosion.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- Patrick O'Leary reports on a Soil Conservation Service demonstration farm in Delaware, and Lynn Wyvill reports on a program to help farmers with disabilities continue farming.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update, five minutes of USDA farm program information in "news desk" format with B-roll.

*Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.:
Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:45 a.m., EDT, and Mondays
from 8 - 8:45 a.m., EDT.*

OFFMIKE

TEACHING TEACHERS...how to use science kits that contain agricultural information is a project of Gary Kinnett (WIAI, Danville, Ill.). Using contacts made through his broadcast programs, he has obtained educational materials from 42 states on agricultural subjects, and has made presentations at 27 schools in Illinois and Indiana. Each kit contains about 30 items. Gary and the Vermilion Vocational Education Delivery Agri-Business Horticulture Committee will share their strategies with broadcasters interested in creating an agriculture literacy project for students. Gary's number is (217) 443-5500.

EXPANSION...of international agricultural news has been undertaken, says **Gary Truitt** (AgriAmerica Network, Indianapolis, Ind.). David Addis (BBC, London) has been signed to coordinate the coverage utilizing a network of reporters across Europe and the CIS. The network also provided coverage of the Earth Summit in Brazil. Gary says he recently saw proof of radio's power. At the close of one program he mentioned that he had a case of rain gauges and would send them to those requesting by mail. Within two days the letters began pouring in and he received many more requests than could be fulfilled. Ag radio, powerful stuff.

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U.S. Department of Agriculture
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2nd ANNUAL...ag tour of Canada will be conducted July 20-24, says **Lynn Ketelsen** (Linder Farm Network, Willmar, Minn.). Hosted by the network, Lynn says the tour sold out in record time to 90 farmers in the Northcentral region.

CONGRATULATIONS...to Dix Harper (WRAL-TV, Raleigh, N.C.). His announced retirement is Aug. 14. Dix's ag broadcasting career began in 1946 at WOI, Ames, Iowa. The last ten years have been at WRAL-TV. Dix was NAFB president in 1988. He plans to move to Menomonee Falls, Wisc. to be closer to family and to open shop as Dix Harper Consultants.

THANKS...to B. Todd Brace (WTOF, Canton, Ohio) for stopping by the office to visit.

UPDATE...on Ray H. Kremer (NAFB Sales and Marketing Board, retired). He and his wife Eleanor recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in Mt. Dora, Fla. Ray was NAFB's first full-time sales and marketing director, beginning service in 1972 and retiring in 1985.

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio and TV Division